

/43 cont. /

782 from the treetop. May the fresh twig, when I step on it with
824 my foot, first grow stronger and then, being strengthened,
grow fresh (soft), etc."

6.

782 A Prayer in Honor of Adnqa or (the same thing) "the
755 Outer Ones"

[775] The souls of the dead, the "outer ones," are often the
[753] cause of sickness in man and his cattle. They often become
angry, and the outward signs of such anger are frequent
yawning, sleepiness, and general exhaustion visited upon
the culprit. If the one afflicted does not satisfy the angered
"outer ones" with offerings and prayers, an inevitable death
awaits him. On one of the Saturdays a meal is prepared of
young rams' meat, chicken, sour milk, and the meat of a
cow, if the soul of a woman is angered, and all these pro-
visions are laid out on a tablecloth under the eaves, on both
sides of which are placed a dress and valuable /44/ objects.

The sick man or woman is placed in the middle of a
circle and either a man or a woman, according to the sex
of the sick person, prays and begs the living and the dead
(Angi-phsngis) to have mercy upon the sick and to grant him
health and to accept the food prepared for them. The per-
son pronouncing the prayer for the sick one then passes his
hand over the back of the sick person and gives him freedom
from his sickness ("azati"). If the ailment is thought to be
caused by the soul of a prince or of some other personage of
[825] high rank, a tethered horse is untied and released in a field
at the concluding words of the prayer: "This (horse) is for
your soul." According to Abkhaz belief, such a horse soon
swells up and dies.

/58 cont. /

731 donkey is brought, which they cover with a white sheet and
789 put the doll on it. One of the girls takes the donkey by the
rein, while two others support the doll, and they set out for
the place where the raft was made. The other girls ac-
company the procession on both sides, singing "dziva dziva
[539] dzvari! Kva kva mykryld aphsh-akh ipha did shivait dzy
khychik, dzy khuchik," which means, "To get water, water!
To get rainwater; a red daisy! Son of the Lord, we thirst
for a little water, a little water!" When they come to the
river, they take the doll from the donkey, put it on the raft,
and, setting the straw afire, let it float downstream; they
then try to chase the donkey into the water, which, of course,
requires no small effort. At last the donkey is dragged into
the river, and, emerging on the opposite bank, he begins
• [825] to bray, which is considered the surest sign of forthcoming
rain. If, however, the donkey fails to bray, the same cere-
mony is repeated anew on the following day or the next
day after that.

25.

Saints

776
778
[184] Independent of the general worship of all the deities dis-
cussed above, the inhabitants of the villages of Lykhny,
Lzaa, and Ilori are under the protection of saints, to whom
the churches erected in those villages are dedicated; or,
more correctly, who are under the protection of the churches
themselves. In Lykhny each family invokes the protection
of Anan-Lykhnykh (the Virgin Mother of Lykhny), in Lzaa,
of Anan-Lzaanykh (the Virgin Mother of Lzaa, i. e., the
cathedral of Pitsunda dedicated to the Holy Virgin), in Ilori,
of Tsminda Giorgi (the cathedral of St. George). To invoke
782 their protection, sacrifices must be offered, which are, in
[796] fact, brought by each family once a year on a Sunday
evening.

[231] - On the day set aside for the offering, the best year-old

[767 cont.]

- 776 good and bad. The Hammerers (Ašatsatšap'atsa) decide the fate of the newborn and write it on their foreheads (lakhintsara). As nature gods they worship the protector of cattle (Ašt'ar), of goats (Džabran), of wild game (Ažvepša), of the earth (Adabna), of the rainbow (Atsakwa), and the protectress of the water (Dzlan dzahwas'), of the wind (P'sarn'a), of seeds (Dž'adž'a and Anap'anga), of dogs (Aliskantra), of bees (Ananagund), and others. Just like the Osset, they have a protector of raiders (Eirig-ātsnykh) or Tšugurukhnykh) and one of smiths (Šyošu). The latter two, which are called upon very frequently, may be of a manistic type, derived from the belief in souls, as may be the protective spirit of the hearth (Aša'ara), the mother-goddess (Anana'a), and the "outer ones" (adnqa) (see p. 22). The Abkhaz attribute to the god of thunder (cf. p. 87) the same power and abilities as the Osset do to the holy Elias, but he is in part confused with the incomprehensible highest god (see p. 61) and is endowed with his abilities, and therefore also the shape of the local supreme god (Anybs-nykha-dudrūp's), whose home is supposed to be the mountain Dudrūpsh at Lykhny. --- Hunters sacrifice a male goat or a ram to the god of game (Ažvepša) before the hunt, which begins after the vintage [768] and lasts until about the new year, so that he will grant them the desired prey from his herds. He gives them, however, only those animals that he and his daughter have already eaten and that he has restored to life by wrapping
- 224
[782] their bones in the skin after his meal. White animals are the herdsmen of Ažvepša and therefore must not be slain.

- Evil souls, similar to the western European vampires,
- 776 tear the eyes, heart, liver, etc. out of the body and suck the milk from the cows. They have different powers and accordingly ride on frogs, mice, cats, or on foxes and wolves. Their chief (Roskipi) lives on the mountain Tabakona, where every year they must account for Mary's Assumption and must exhibit the plundered body-parts. For this reason the Abkhaz put up
- [788] crosses during fasts, carry lights on their heads, and on the previous night stay up and shoot and sing. The evil souls can at the same time stay among men and on the mountain Tabakona, since

196 *d-khwazhw* and entreats god *Alëshkintz* to grant the house faithful dogs—those best friends of man and reliable watchers of his weal; the prayer at the same time spills some of the hot *a-k'warəpə* or *a-k'warəpə* (a thick broth of *d-khwazhw*, or millet) towards the sea and some towards the mountains, uttering "Wootsw! Burn out the tongue of the evil-speaker, the eyes of the evil-eyed", and continues his prayer. In the opinion of the commission, *Alëshkintz* is also "part" of *Ayt'ar*. [196] *Ala* denotes dog; *shkintz*, however, is incomprehensible.

The commission explained that "dog" was mentioned before [93] "man" on account of the former being more capable of loyalty to a master than the latter.

671 It should be noted that the common law values the blood of a
685 dog in proportion to that of its owner; the blood of a baron's dog is
825 equal to that of a baron, of a peasant's to that of a peasant, etc.

539 From the lips of K. Dolbaia (Abkh. Delba), an 80-year-old Abkha-
231 sian, who possesses an expert knowledge of the Abkhasian language, I wrote down the following tale:—

"In ancient times, when Abkhasia was inhabited by giants and devas (daevas), Aslan, one of the giants, would not leave the devas in peace. Once, when he was asleep, the devas crept up stealthily, bound him with silk laces, blinded and killed him, and threw him into a pit as deep as a well. On their return from their usual hunting expedition, his dogs discovered their master, but they could not pull him out of the well. They fell upon an ox-cart driver who happened to be passing by, and compelled him to rescue their master from the well and unbind him. The dogs licked Aslan for three days and three nights, and so brought him back to life and restored his sight."¹

[89] The following superstition prevails among the Abkhasians. If someone, noticing the heavens bursting open, succeeds in uttering *Ləri*, *vəri*, *khəzə*, *jkhwəri*, he will have all his wishes fulfilled. Only one woman was honoured with this great good fortune, the widow of a Mukvabba. *Ləri* is interpreted as *lala* which denotes dog; *vəri* (*vəri* from *awryə*,* man) as man; *khəzə* as whey; *jkhwəri* as the crust of millet porridge; uttered together they are supposed to mean "make me rich". My Abkhasian advisers repeatedly emphasized that the dog was mentioned first because of its unexampled loyalty and fidelity to man, his master.

716 (d) *Amza-nəhwa*, Prayer to the Moon.

796 The supplicant takes the moon-shaped cake and says: "Thou,

[104] * See p. 122, note *. According to Marr, the throat participates vigorously in the protraction of this composite or diffusive sound, and in a way as if the sound of the guttural "s" (the ancient Arabic 'sīn) were also heard. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

[171] The Academician N. Y. Marr has kindly directed my attention to Moses of Khoren, who describes how by order of Semiramis, the dogs of Araks (cf. *Alëshkintz*) licked the corpse of Aru or Araks, the Armenian Prince, in order to revive him.

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I. *Adzrga-khwasha*

Either during the night before *baioha*, or, according to some members of the Commission, on the Wednesday evening of Passion-week, is observed the rite of binding legs with wool threads. Having supped early, the family retires to bed, each individual thrusting out his or her right leg from under the blanket. The eldest woman in the family stands on a stool in the middle of the room, and spins thread from wool. She does her work in silence. Having spun the required quantity, she quietly approaches the beds, and binds with this thread the right leg of each of their occupants, murmuring: "May God grant thee to see such days for a hundred years!" *Adzrga* (more correctly, *adzrga*) denotes a thick thread; *a-khwasha*—Friday, so that this rite was in former days, probably, observed on Fridays. The threads were afterwards burnt on the fire under the small cauldron in which was boiled the meat of the sacrificial animal, on Easter Day. [796] [182]

2. *K'wab-gharghar**

As soon as the binding ceremony was finished, the woman seized a copper cauldron, or a copper basin, and struck it like a gong, shouting at the top of her voice: "We have beaten! We have beaten!" The whole family then ran out into the garden, shouting *shwa!k'wat'weyt!* "We have beaten you (outstripped)!" The "beaten" neighbours, annoyed to find themselves "beaten", immediately fell upon them, and a mock battle ensued. The battle was fought, of course, entirely as a joke, and with great merriment. In ancient times, a whole village often went to "battle" against another, beating copper cauldrons and basins. The "battle" was followed by dances and fun-making, continuing till the dawn. *A-k'wab* denotes cauldron of copper, *gharghar*, knock, rap, clatter of a copper cauldron or basin. [415] [535]

3. *Aqat'wara*

This Abkhasian term denotes the following superstition: an Abkhas considers it a great misfortune if he hears the warbling or chirping of a swallow or the call of a cuckoo, before he has had his breakfast (or has at any rate partaken of salt); the bird will have "beaten" him, and this he regards as a great misfortune. In order to avoid this he eats salt, or something salt-flavoured immediately on rising from bed, which means that he has won the "contest".¹ [825]

* The labial semi-vowel "w" in "kw", "fw", as also in "hw", "fw", etc., met with in this article, labialises the preceding consonant sound, the combination "kw", "fw", etc., representing labialized varieties of "k", "f", etc. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.] 104

¹ Georgians also have such a superstition. 171

148
 796 I quote here the following story: "A female slave of a family,
 539 being angry with her masters, took a portion of the dough for *akvakhw*
 [567] destined for the "god" *Gof'anäa*, and placing it in a scoop of bitter-
 gourd (*akvapey*, Geo. *hope*), hid it in the loft. As usual the family
 went to bed after the ceremony. But unfortunately for them the
 offended *Gof'anäa* soundly thrashed all of them, using for the purpose
 the very same scoop in which had been hidden the dough destined for
 himself. This *gvari* makes propitiatory offerings at the will of sorcerers
 to *Gof'anäa* twice a year, during the night before Christmas and
 before the Assumption.

Gof'anäa, under the name of *Okhvdmuri*, evidently spread through-
 out Megrelia during the missionaryship of Lamberti.¹

V. DEITIES WHOSE CULTS HAVE NO FIXED DATES

1. *Et-näkhä—Aga-näkhä*

796 The sea, like other manifestations of nature, has its own "part
 [823] of deity", called *Aga-inkhw* or *aga-intswakhw*. An Abkhaz makes an
 [785] offering to this deity when he goes to the sea coast for any considerable
 time. The sea deity is not to be trifled with; if it is slighted it becomes
 turbulent, it surges, and punishes the unrespectful. Therefore even
 the children are forbidden to throw pebbles, or to spit into the sea.
 The worship of this deity has been preserved in its purest form among
 the Bzib Abkhazians, namely among the peasantry of the Gudout
 (Gudaut) district, of the *gvari* of Amp'aräa. It has been described by
 A. Tch(ukbar), in *Sotrudnik Zakavkazskoy Missii* ("The Collaborator
 of the Transcaucasian Mission"), 1912, p. 373 sqq., where the deity
Et-näkh-Aga-näkhä is called *Et-nykh Ag-Nykh*. *Aga* denotes sea,
 (*a*)*näkh*—"icon." But what does the word *Et* denote?²

2. *Ashkhä-intswakhw* (god of mountains)

[803] Mountains also have "their part of God" known under the name
 of *Ashkhä-intswakhw*. *Ashkhä* denotes mountain; *intswakhw*,
 "his (of the male rational being) part of God." I have pointed out
 above that the Abkhaz often uses the word *näkhä* in the sense of god,
 which in the Christian faith is understood, or more correctly, translated,
 as icon. The god of mountains "governs" all the mountains and the
 beasts inhabiting them. Abkhaz shepherds make offerings to this
 [833] god twice a year, in the spring when they drive the cattle to the
 [805] mountains, and in the autumn when they drive them back. To him
 are subject also mountain game. In order to preserve the game from

¹ A. Lamberti, op. cit., pp. 148-9.

² This word manifests a consonance with the Assyro-Babylonian name of the god
 of the sea, *Ea*. Is this a mere coincidence?

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their enemies, the god ordered the bird *aqagab* to watch over them; the Megrelians who have the same belief, call this bird *kakabi*.¹ As soon as this bird sights at a distance a hunter or some other enemy, it soars high up into the sky, and by screeching warns the game of the approach of danger. That is why this bird is always found near the beasts. [776, 1805, 771]

The god of the mountains demands respect. He punishes severely those bold enough to bathe in clear, transparent mountain streams. The Abkhaz shepherds do not, therefore, bathe in these streams, being afraid of drawing upon themselves the displeasure of the god of the mountains: the nude body is said to defile the waters of the mountain spirit. [515]

3. *Azhwëyp'shad* (gods of beasts and hunting) *

Azhwëyp'shad are gods of beasts and of hunting. They dwell in impassable forests, and lead an ordinary family life. To them are subjected all game, and without their will no one can shoot bird or beast. These gods kill for themselves some wild animal, boil and eat its meat; they wrap the bones in its skin and then revive the animal by striking it with a wand. Only after an animal has been resurrected in this way is a hunter granted the right to shoot it, and then only the particular hunter for whom the gods have destined it: no one else, try as much as he will, can kill it. Of this the Abkhazians are aware, and they employ the following characteristic greeting when they encounter a fellow hunter: *sp'së-akhkhw yäsp'shär*, "Which is destined to die, that (animal) is waiting for thee!" the answer being, "For both of us is waiting!" [224]

A few words may be said about the way in which Abkhazians divine the success or failure of their hunting on the day of the Assumption. Before starting out the hunter takes a sharp knife and repeatedly strikes the table, cutting nicks in it. Passing his palm over the table, he says: "Whether thou sayest fifteen, whether I say fifteen, whoever says fifteen (it will be) thirty, fifteen." If the nicks thus cut number exactly fifteen it is a good omen; the gods will reward him with game. [224, 787]

The Abkhazians learnt this method in the following manner. A hunter once followed a wild goat, but he could not shoot it. It led him into the thick of a wood, where he saw a huge cauldron, around which sat gods. They invited him to join them. Nearby stood a goat. They killed the latter and invited the hunter to partake of the meal. When the gods began to throw bones into the hide, the hunter concealed one of them, putting in its place a small stick (or a small knife, [539])

¹ The word is consonant with the Georgian *Kakabi*, partridge.

² The term is construed as plural.